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NEWS

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Remember Wildlife at Tax Time

Californians can receive tax credit from the Franchise Tax Board for helping wildlife—really!

More than 300 species of California wildlife are currently listed as endangered or threatened, and hundreds more are at risk. California taxpayers can support the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Rare and Endangered Species Preservation program by donating a few dollars to this dedicated fund on Line 403 of the state tax Form 540.

"The generous donations we receive from taxpayers are critical to our endangered species research and monitoring efforts," said Dale Steele, DFG Non-Game Wildlife Program Manager. "These funds have provided critical support for many state-listed endangered species such as the Swainson's hawk, island fox, California condor, Bakersfield cactus, California tiger salamander and many more."

California is one of 41 states that allow taxpayers to make a voluntary, tax-deductible contribution to one or more worthwhile causes in the Contributions section of their state return. Since 1983 the tax check-off fund for Rare and Endangered Species has raised more than \$17 million and supported numerous projects, including the identification of a previously-unknown population of the California black rail, a rare and elusive bird found in the eastern foothills of the Sacramento Valley. The discovery has allowed wildlife biologists to focus restoration attention on the rail's foothill wetland habitat to help conserve the species.

In 2007, a new tax check-off fund was created to specifically benefit the California sea otter, which is on both the state and federal threatened species lists. Saved from the brink of extinction in recent decades, sea otters are extremely vulnerable to boat strikes and non-point-source pollution such as urban and agricultural runoff. A recent decline in their population has been linked to *Toxoplasma gondii*, a parasite carried in possum and cat feces.

"This tax check-off program is the only fundraiser dedicated to researching the reasons behind prime-age adult sea otters' deaths," said Dave Jessup, senior wildlife veterinarian with DFG's Office of Spill Prevention and Response. "We've already been able to determine it's not a simple problem of one disease, one pesticide or issue. Now we're looking at which contributing factors can be better controlled, reduced or regulated. The tax check-off funds allow us to keep the research program going."

You can support this research by making a contribution on Line 410 of your state tax form 540, the California Sea Otter Fund. More information on the Rare and Endangered Species tax-check off program is available at www.dfg.ca.gov/taxcheck. DFG has partnered with Defenders of Wildlife to help promote the Sea Otter Fund. An excellent video about the sea otters' current plight is on their Web site, www.defenders.org; keywords "tax check-off."

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